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Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015

Sustainable development: implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

Revised estimates resulting from the decisions contained in General Assembly resolution 67/290, entitled "Format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development" (A/68/365)

Fifteenth report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General on revised estimates relating to the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015 resulting from decisions contained in General Assembly resolution 67/290, entitled "Format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development" (A/68/365). During its consideration of the report, the Advisory Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided additional information and clarifications, concluding with responses received in writing on 26 November 2013.

2. As indicated in paragraph 1 of the report of the Secretary-General, the General Assembly, in its resolution 67/290, decided on the format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, as called for in resolution 66/288. According to the Secretary-General, in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the Assembly, he had submitted a statement on the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/67/L.72 (A/67/927), prior to the adoption of the draft resolution, in which he informed the Assembly that the implementation of the recommendations contained in resolution 67/290 would give rise to additional resource requirements in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015.

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3. The Secretary-General further stated that, before the adoption of resolution 67/290, the President of the General Assembly had drawn the attention of the Assembly to the statement of the Secretary-General on the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/67/L.72, and noted that the Fifth Committee would examine, during the sixty-eighth session of the Assembly, the programme budget implications arising from the draft resolution and the report of the Advisory Committee.

4. **The Advisory Committee notes with concern the exceptional procedure followed by the Secretary-General in presenting the statement on the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/67/L.72, whereby the statement contained in A/67/927 had been presented to the General Assembly, without it being considered in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the Assembly, which reads:**

> **No resolution involving expenditure shall be recommended by a committee for approval by the General Assembly unless it is accompanied by an estimate of expenditures prepared by the Secretary-General. No resolution in respect of which expenditures are anticipated by the Secretary-General shall be voted by the General Assembly until the Administrative and Budgetary Committee (Fifth Committee) has had an opportunity of stating the effect of the proposal upon the budget estimates of the United Nations.**

5. Concerning the exceptional procedure noted above, the Advisory Committee, upon enquiry, was provided with the information already contained in the summary of the report of the Secretary-General, and was further informed that, subsequent to the adoption of resolution 67/290 on 9 July 2013, the statement on the programme budget implications was reformatted into a report on revised estimates for the consideration of the Fifth Committee. **The Committee regrets the non-compliance by the Secretary-General with the procedure established under rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly in presenting the statement on the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/67/L.72 (A/67/927).**

6. **The Advisory Committee trusts the Secretary-General to ensure in the future that all statements on programme budget implications are presented to the Fifth Committee in accordance with the procedure established under rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the Assembly.**

7. In paragraph 3 of his report, the report of the Secretary-General indicated that resolution 67/290 responds to a mandate from the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 20 to 22 June 2012. In the outcome document of the Conference, entitled "The future we want", Heads of State and Government decided to establish a universal, intergovernmental, high-level political forum, building on the strengths, experiences, resources and inclusive participation modalities of the Commission on Sustainable Development and subsequently replacing the Commission (see resolution 66/288, annex, para. 84). In its resolution 67/290 (para. 2), the General Assembly decided that the high-level political forum on sustainable development would provide political leadership, guidance and recommendations for sustainable development, follow up and review progress in the implementation of sustainable development commitments and enhance the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development. It also decided that the meetings of the high-level political forum would be convened every

four years under the auspices of the Assembly, and annually under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council.

8. At the time of its consideration of the revised estimates of the Secretary-General (A/68/365), the Advisory Committee was informed that on 20 September 2013, the General Assembly had adopted resolution 68/1, entitled "Review of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 61/16 on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council". The resolution provides, inter alia, that the regular meetings of the substantive sessions of the Economic and Social Council will be held in New York and the humanitarian affairs segment shall continue to alternate between New York and Geneva.[1] The resolution also provides that the high-level segment of the Council will include the three-day ministerial segment of the high-level political forum on sustainable development provided for in resolution 67/290. Upon enquiry, the Committee was informed that the resolution required the Secretary-General to further revise his estimated expenditure for the high-level political forum on sustainable development. **The Committee believes that, subsequent to the adoption by the Assembly of its resolution 68/1, the report of the Secretary-General (A/68/365) should have been revised to reflect the provisions of the resolution, as applicable to the high-level political forum on sustainable development, prior to being presented for its consideration. The Committee trusts that, in future, changes arising out of new mandates of the Assembly, when applicable, shall be fully reflected in documents presented to the Committee for its consideration.**

9. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that, subsequent to the adoption by the General Assembly of its resolution 68/1, the additional resources required to support the activities relating to the high-level political forum amounted to $754,600 under section 9, Economic and social affairs, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015. According to the Secretary-General, the additional resource requirement consisted of the travel expenses for one representative of each of the least developed countries, to be paid from the regular budget, for participation in all formal meetings of the forum. The Committee was also informed that the additional resource requirements identified in A/68/365 would need to be revised as follows:

(a) The cost of travel of representatives would be estimated at $754,600, reflecting an increase of $58,800 compared with the $695,800 identified in paragraphs 13 and 14 of the revised estimates of the Secretary-General (see resolution 68/1, annex, para. 16);

(b) The cost of travel of staff in 2015 in the amount of $46,000, as identified in paragraph 16, would no longer be required.

The Committee was further informed that the above changes would result in a net increase of $12,800 in the level of additional resources requested in the report.

10. **Taking into account its comments and recommendations in the paragraphs above, the Advisory Committee has no objection to the additional resource requirement of $754,600 estimated by the Secretary-General under**

[1] Currently, the Economic and Social Council holds its annual four-week substantive session in July in alternate years in New York and Geneva. The substantive session is organized in five segments: the high-level segment, the coordination segment, the operational activities segment, the humanitarian affairs segment and the general segment.

section 9, Economic and social affairs, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015. This would represent a charge against the contingency fund and, as such, would require appropriation for the biennium.

11. As indicated in paragraph 8 above, pursuant to resolution 68/1, the Economic and Social Council shall hold the regular meetings of the various segments of its substantive sessions in New York, with the exception of the humanitarian affairs segment, which shall continue to alternate between New York and Geneva. The Advisory Committee is of the view that this may result in a reduction in the overall cost of travel of staff proposed under section 9 for the biennium 2014-2015. **The Committee expects that, in the case of a reduction in the overall cost of travel of staff, information shall be provided in the context of the performance reports for the biennium 2014-2015.**